

A *Original MS.*

S E R M O N,

DEDICATED TO THE MOST HONOURABLE

J O H N Marquis of G R A N B Y,

Commander in Chief of the British Forces during the late

War in Germany, &c.

BY SIDNEY SWINNEY, D.D. *R*

Fellow of the ROYAL and ANTIQUARIAN Societies.

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TO THE MOST HONOURABLE

JOHN MARQUIS OF GRANBY,

COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE BRITISH FORCES

DURING THE LAST WAR IN GERMANY,

AND TO ALL THE GENERAL AND SUBALTERN

OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS,

THIS SERMON IS MOST HUMBLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR OBLIGED SERVANT,

SIDNEY SWINNEY.

S T. L U K E iii. 14.

AND THE SOLDIERS LIKEWISE DEMANDED OF HIM, SAYING, AND WHAT SHALL WE DO? AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, DO VIOLENCE TO NO MAN, NEITHER ACCUSE ANY FALSELY; AND BE CONTENT WITH YOUR WAGES.

THE holy baptist, St. John, who had been declared of God the forerunner and harbinger of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, had, from his early youth, lived in the wilderness of Judea, where his sustenance was "locusts and wild honey, and his raiment consisted of a covering of camel's hair." We may, therefore, most reasonably conclude that his manner of life was sober, temperate, and abstemious; and his apparel modest, humble and decent; such, in short, as became the man who was to preach the glad tidings of a Savior, to the world; and who, looking upon the high charge he had been honored with from above, had something of far greater importance to mind, than to be solicitous about "what he should eat, or what he should drink, or, wherewithal he should be cloathed." This holy and devout person being, now, arrived at man's estate, thought proper to assume the administration of that high office which had been committed to him. He, therefore, began his preaching about Jordan, whither the neighbouring people flocked, in crouds, to hear his new doctrine. Various were the tem-
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pers, the degrees, and callings of his audience. But, amongst the rest, it appears that the publicans, and soldiers, came to him, from whom something of good, candid and humane might be looked for, as it appears that Jesus Christ saw so clearly into the heart and soul of one publican, at least, as to think him not an unworthy host, for himself. And, it is evident, that the Holy Baptist did not entertain the worse opinion of the soldiers (as soldiers;) but, on the contrary, gave them a kind reception. It created, no doubt, an inward satisfaction in him to find that a set of men (who frequently, perhaps, had labored under the unjust censure of the world, for their depredations and acts of cruelty or extortion,) had thought him a proper instructor and healer of their spiritual infirmities. Rejoicing, therefore, that persons of so busy an occupation had found time and leisure to consult him upon a case of conscience, he was determined to give them as concise, and comprehensive a form of moral conduct as possible, avoiding, at the same time, all sarcasms against their heathenish superstitions; heathenish, I say, because I do with good reason believe that the soldiers which came to St. John, were Romans, and consequently, Pagans. Why I presume to be of this opinion is, because at the time of John the Baptist, it is evident from history, that the Jewish nation was a conquered people, and tributary to the Romans. On which account they were not permitted to enrol soldiers of their own; but were under the necessity of receiving Roman garrisons into their towns and cities. Not to mention many other instances which readily occur, in proof of this assertion,

assertion, you must all recollect that our Savior himself was tried, and condemned by a Roman Proconsul, or governor (Pontius Pilate) and was crucified by Roman soldiers, who cast lots, afterwards, for his vesture; and who also watched at his sepulchre. It being agreed, then, that the soldiers who came to St. John, in the wilderness, were Romans; I shall now endeavor to point out the particular propriety of the baptist's adapting so comprehensive, and yet so short a lesson of instructions, to those his auditors.

He, therefore, first enjoined them to "do violence to no man." The rectitude of this injunction will appear, at first sight, to those who shall only reflect that soldiers, of all people, should be cautioned not to abuse the power with which they must necessarily be entrusted. And this admonition was the more proper, at a time, when the Romans, vainly imagining themselves lords of the universe, had governed the tributary nations with a rod of iron, instead of the meek sway of brother citizens. There was, moreover, a farther reason for this piece of advice; for St. John, knowing that many of his brethren, the Jews, had been informed against by the soldiers, and others, for believing in, and holding forth strange doctrines (by which cruel insinuations numbers of his nation had been put to an ignominious death) he very appositely enjoins them to do "violence to no man."

And his second precept will appear, to the full, as apposite as the first --- "accuse not any falsely."

If we take the word "falsely" in its full dimensions, this precept contains a refraining from every possible instance of "false accusations." But if we apply it (along with the Baptist) to the persons it was meant to instruct; it more particularly alludes to the naughty practice of soldiers informing against innocent people for filthy lucre's sake. It is incredible to think, what myriads of miserable Jews were put to death by the emperor Tiberius, and too many of his successors, for the sake of their religion. For whensoever it happened that a despotic favourite, an avaricious governor, or a needy soldier wanted to fill his coffers, or raise a sufficient sum of money, for his present exigencies; he had nothing more to do, than to insinuate, either by his emissaries, or in his own proper person, that unless such, or such a district immediately paid him a certain stipulated sum, he would inform against them, for believing in a "false God" (as the pagans most impiously styled the Almighty.) This threatening message had frequently the desired effect; but if, by chance, they miss'd of their aim, and the Jews (they sent to) were any ways refractory, then it was, that these wretches turned informers, and glutted their vengeance and rancour, when they could not satiate their avarice.

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And, here, I must observe that, although informers, in general, have ever laid under a bad name; yet, certainly, such vile informers, as those, deserved to be brandished, with infamy, instead of meeting with encouragement from their superiors, which they too frequently did; otherwise, not near so much blood would have been spilt, for conscience sake, as unhappily has been, both in the pagan, and christian world. Informers, we must grant, are, and ever have been, a necessary evil in states and governments; but, then, it highly becomes those, who are in power, to take care that this set of people are guilty of as few vexatious informations, as possible; and that they be not permitted (more than the absolute good of prince, and people requires) to bring grievous accusations against others, merely for the sake of the reward. Informers, in the times of the Greeks, were called *sycophants* (altho the word has, by us, been more used to denominate a fawning flatterer, than an informer :) and the reason they were so called was, because in a season where there was a great scarcity of figs (which, in those days, were as much the food of the Athenians, as bread corn is with us) a severe prohibition was enacted against the exporters of them, and very justly too. *Σύκος*, is the Greek word for a “fig;” and *Συκοφάντης* is the term for a “sycophant” or “informer.”

By this time you have, I doubt not, considered and observed the propriety of the holy baptist, St. John, in exhorting the soldiers, to “accuse no man falsely.” I therefore come to con-

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sider his *third* and *last* exhortation, in the following words :
 “ and be content with your wages”.

This precaution and advice appeared, it seems, to the full as necessary, as the two preceding precepts; and with great reason it did so. For not only a man more immediately inspired, and sent of God, to reclaim sinners would know; but a person, too, of common understanding must be sensible that, as long as this, or that person remained “contented with his wages”, and satisfied with that state of life, in which it had pleased God to place him; so long, at least, he would refrain from all dishonest means, to encrease his income, or allowance. How extremely applicable, then, must this precept, of “being content with their wages” appear to the soldiers, themselves, for whose use it was principally designed by St. John?

And now, my fellow soldiers in the Lord, - permit me to give you a word or two of advice (from the words of my text) before I conclude this discourse.

And first :

“Do violence to no man”, either in his character, his fortune, his person, or his connexions. Should party feuds, disturbances, or riots call you forth, by legal authority, to quell them; be cautious how you use the sword, and do not wantonly sport with
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with that dangerous weapon. Consider you are entrusted, in some degree, with the guardianship of your fellow subjects lives and properties. 'Tis yours, therefore, in an especial manner, to protect and screen them from danger, with the shield of righteousness; and by no means to injure their persons or fortunes, either by open violence, or secret wickedness. Should Riots, however, or popular insurrections, get to such a head, as that they cannot be quelled without blows, and even bloodshed; be as cautious, as possible, not to act without the peremptory commands of the Civil Magistrate, transmitted to you by your respective officers. But before you come to this extremity endeavour, by every soothing method, to pacify the turbulent, and awe, by your resolute and determined countenances, the seditious spirits into a due subjection to the laws. So perfectly well regulated is our army, and so judiciously appointed with officers, that I verily believe there are few in number (nay they are as rare as black swans) who would even wish you, much less command you, to fire upon your fellow-subjects precipitately, or from malice prepense. But if, after nobly putting their own ill usage, from an unthinking, incensed rabble, out of the question, they find themselves under the disagreeable necessity of complying with the written commands of the Civil Magistrate, and ordering you to fire in consequence of those commands; it is then, and not till then, your absolute duty to obey: and whatsoever damage shall be done, or whatsoever blood (innocent or guilty blood) shall be spilt, through your obedience to orders received,

will venture (without being a casuist) to pronounce you innocent of that blood. Appear not, however, too elated, too alert, too precipitate in executing these necessary, but sanguine orders. It may sometime happen that the Civil Magistrate may be so provoked (for so great is human frailty) by personal ill usage from a mob, or from a single abettor of the mob, as to wish to wreak his vengeance upon the whole, instead of endeavouring to get the party offending secured. In this case 'tis plain, that his resentment has got the better of his reason; and who knows, but by a momentary delay in obeying his orders, he may be disposed to give counter-orders, and smother his own resentments, for fear the innocent may suffer with the guilty.

The Poet says,

“ An hasty word irrevocably flies.”

And may not we say,

“ An hasty Ball irrevocably flies ?”

It is for this weighty reason that I advise and urge you, not to be too solicitous in exhibiting yourselves the too speedy ministers and instruments of the Magistrates wrath. If Historians may be credited, Queen Elizabeth bitterly repented of having signed the dead-warrant, for execution of the Earl of Essex; but when she wished to send counter-orders, and mitigate his sentence, it was too late; for the high offender was so industriously put to death, in conformity to his sentence, that her Majesty's reprieve was ineffectual. We are blessed with a King upon the throne who has, ever, made the happiness of his subjects the rule of his government.

vernment. Depend upon it, therefore, he will be best satisfied with your conduct when you shall prudently use, and not wantonly disabuse, the power with which your country hath entrusted you. For his Majesty is conscious the sword was committed into your hands primarily for the defence of his Royal Person, Family, and Government, against the open assaults and attacks of his enemies; and, secondarily, for the suppression of all disturbers of the public peace and safety.

In the next place, let me entreat you, my beloved in the Lord, “to accuse no man falsely,” or, in other words, to avoid the dishonorable office of malicious informers, and busy sycophants. Should your duty (as it does at present) call you against the public enemies of your King and Country abroad; use the conquered with lenity, and the prostrate with compassion. It may be your misfortune, if God so pleaseth, to fall into their hands, instead of their becoming your prisoners. Therefore, with what measure you meted withal, depend upon it the same measure will be meted out to you. And indeed it is but doing you common justice to observe, that the French, who are a generous enemy, and a grateful people, have already given numberless instances of their gratitude to the British soldiers, for their humanity towards them, when in their hands. And no wonder they should do so; for, to your everlasting honor, I myself have known sergeants, corporals, and common-soldiers reject, with a noble indignation, the presents which captive officers have tended them, to bribe them into pity and good usage. True British breasts
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self-kindled and self-agitated by every brave and praise-worthy sentiment) disdain all mercenary motives to good works and acts of benevolence; for Britons think themselves sufficiently rewarded by the true joy, and satisfaction which a good conscience affords them.

Let me, farther, remind you to behave in the countries, you shall either march through, or be quartered in, in such a becoming manner, as that the various inhabitants of them may wish to see your faces again. Abstain, equally, from all acts of open violence, and private pilfering and marauding. So shall your God, who seeth in secret, and looketh into the innermost recesses of the heart, reward you openly, and crown you at last (not with such transitory lawrels as you have hitherto bravely acquired) but with crowns that shall never fade.

Should it happen that you of the cavalry, on your return home, shall be sent out against runners of goods, in open violation of the laws; be diligent in apprehending the offenders, but very cautious in shedding their blood. An hasty wound, inflicted, cannot always be sewed up, or healed; and a sword, once unsheathed, may much sooner be stained with blood of victims, than washed from its stains. The same or equal precautions are, therefore, to be observed by you, in this case, as in what I have hinted on occasion of riots and insurrection.

In the last place, lay it down as an inviolable rule to be "content with your wages" or pay. Your adhering strictly and inviolably to this rule will be a means of preserving you in the

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Love of God, in your duty to your King, in obedience to your respective officers ; and will, moreover, procure you the esteem of all good men. By this steady perseverance of “ contentment with your wages ” you will never stoop to do a mean thing, much less commit an inhuman and barbarous action. A neglect of this most excellent precept has driven many an unwary wretch into the blackest and most desperate crimes ; the perpetration of these has made him, with reason, despair of pardon ; and that despair has driven him to the horrid sin of deserting his King and Country ; which atrocious behavior is certain of bringing him, if taken in the pursuit, to a shameful and ignominious death. And here I must observe, that as no monarch upon earth supports his armies with better pay, and warmer cloathing, than our gracious sovereign doth his ; so I will be bold to say, no monarch whatsoever is more loyally, faithfully, and strenuously served by his troops, than the King of Great Britain. Therefore, if duty and gratitude (for royal favor and grace, perpetually received) can bind, certain I am, you will persist to shew yourselves, true, brave, spirited, and christian soldiers. “ Do violence to no man ; accuse not any falsely, and be content with your wages.”

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love of God, in your love, in obedience to your
respective offices; and will, therefore, present you the claims
of all good men. By this freely purchased of "contentment
ment with your wages." I will not say that it is a mean thing
much less content an ordinary and laborious life. I will
less of this world excellent people have been many an ordinary
wretched into the blackest and most desolate crimes; the pro-
nation of such has made him, with reason, a subject of pity;
and that God has given him to the world in of deserving
his King and Country, and his behavior is certain
of bringing him, if he is punished to a shameful and
ignominious death. And thus I must observe, that as no mo-



warmer clothing, than our gracious sovereign has; so I will
be bold to say, no monarch whatsoever is more loyal, faithful,
and strenuously served by his troops, than the King of Great
Britain. Therefore, if duty and gratitude (for royal favor and
grace, perpetually received) can bind, certain I am, you will
perish to draw your sword, and fight, and Christian
soldiers. "No violence to no man; accuse not any falsely; and
be content with your wages."

